THE MINISTER OF CONSUMER AFFAIRS, FOOD AND PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION (SHRI SHARAD YADAV): (a) to (c) Prices of essential commodities, as others, are subject to variations depending on the demand and supply and contingent factors. However, prices of most of the essential commodities have remained steady over the year. The prices are regularly monitored to contain any abnormal price rise. Government announces Minimum Support Prices (MSP) for cereals, pulses and oilseeds based on recommendations of Commission for Agricultural Costs and Prices every year. Natural calamities like floods, drought and deficient rainfall are also taken into account while fixing MSP to protect the interest of the farmers. The issue prices of essential commodities like rice, wheat, sugar and kerosene are fixed at a lower level than open market prices for distribution through Public Distribution System to protect the interests of consumers, particularly, of vulnerable sections.

Finalisation of accounts by FCI

2617. SHRI K. KALAVENKATA RAO: Will the Minister of CONSUMER AFFAIRS, FOOD AND PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that the Food Corporation of India has not finalised its accounts for the last three years;

(b) if so, the reasons therefor; and

(c) the action proposed against those responsible for irregularities?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF CONSUMER AFFAIRS, FOOD AND PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION (SHRI SUBHASH MAHARIA) : (a) and (b) While the Food Corporation of India (FCI) prepares its accounts on an annual basis it could not submit its Audit Reports upto date, there was a dispute between the FCI and the Principal Auditors appointed by the Comptroller and Auditor General (C&AG). After an amendment in the Food Corporations Act, 1964 in May, 2000, the C&AG has become the sole auditor. The accounts of the FCI have since been certified by the C&AG upto the year 1999-2000 and laid in the both the Houses of Parliament. The position of finalisation of accounts for the last three years are as under :—

2000-01—The accounts have been adopted by the Board of Directors of FCI. The Audit Report of C&AG is awaited.

2001-02—The accounts have been completed. Audit of accounts by C&AG is in progress/discussion stage.

2002-03 —The finalisation of accounts is in advanced stage and audit is expected to commence shortly. The accounts will become due for laying in the Parliament around December, 2003.

(c) In view of the reply given to parts (a) and (b) above, the question does not arise.

Beneficiaries of Annapurna Scheme in Orissa

2618. SHRI RAMACHANDRA KHUNTIA: Will the Minister of CONSUMER AFFAIRS, FOOD AND PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION be pleased to state:

(a) the total number of beneficiaries of 60 years and above, identified so far under 'Annapurna Scheme' in Orissa;

(b) the total quantity of foodgrains allotted and distributed so far under the scheme in Orissa; and

(c) the fresh steps taken by Government to widen the scope of the scheme in order to cover more people living below poverty line in Orissa?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF CONSUMER AFFAIRS, FOOD AND PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION (SHRI SUBHASH MAHARIA) : (a) The State Government of Orissa has identified 64,800 beneficiaries under the scheme.

(b) A Statement showing total quantity of foodgrains allocated and distributed so far under the scheme in Orissa is enclosed (*See* below).

(c) The scheme has been transferred to State Plan from 2002-03 along with the National Social Assistance Programme comprising the National Old Age Pension Scheme and the National Family Benefit Scheme. The funds for the transferred schemes are released by the Minister of Finance as Additional Central Assistance (ACA) to the State Plan and the States have the requisite flexibility in the choice and implementation of the schemes. However, foodgrains are allocated by the Government of India to States/UTs at BPL rates on the basis of number of beneficiaries identified and their requirement of foodgrains @ 10 kg. per beneficiary per month under the scheme.